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ABSTRACT

This study conducted a theme analysis of programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission of the National Communication Association (NCA, formerly the Speech Communication Association, SCA) in order to determine experiential learning structures created outside conventional borders of communication instruction. The philosophical basis for the study was that of experiential learning, which links the concrete with the abstract through experiencing, describing, inferring, and transferring processes. All programs listed in the (S)NCA Conference Programs from 1993-1998 were analyzed for emerging themes, which were then divided into five categories: (1) internships; (2) service learning; (3) outcome assessment; (4) issues; and (5) strategies and techniques. Findings suggest that the members of the Commission create their own boundaries in communication instruction compliant with the principles of experiential learning, and that additional areas of investigation are evident, such as outcome assessment of strategies and techniques as well as theory and method development and evaluation. (EF)

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COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES: THEMES AND TRENDS IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN COMMUNICATION COMMISSION SPONSORED PROGRAMS AT THE (S)NCA 1993-1998 CONFERENCES

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Introduction

It can be argued that no other NCA Commission or Division better personifies the 1999 NCA convention theme of "Coloring Outside the Lines" than the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission. By its very nature the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission has always advocated and stood for 'coloring outside the lines' in communication instruction and pedagogy. The heart of experiential learning is to look beyond the lines, borders and boundaries of traditional or conventional academic and pedagogical roles, structures and disciplines. There can be little doubt that experiential learning techniques and strategies have undoubtedly expanded the conventional instructional and pedagogical lines and boundaries of communication education.

However, when one colors outside the lines, one is still left with some form of pattern or design on the coloring surface. This pattern or design may be original, but it still becomes a creation with its own structure. Coloring outside the lines eventually stops somewhere and the stopping point becomes the new line that borders and structures the new creation. Therefore, a new structure of lines has simply replaced the old lines that were initially colored outside. The purpose of this paper is to examine what new lines and structures the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission has created by 'coloring outside the lines' of the traditional and conventional methods of communication instruction and pedagogy.

In order to determine experiential learning's lines and structures created outside the conventional and traditional borders and boundaries of communication instruction and pedagogy, a detailed theme analysis of programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission at NCA conventions was undertaken. The data for this analysis consisted of all the programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission since its

inclusion in the (S)NCA convention in 1993 through 1998.

Through such an analysis, this paper determined the trends within experiential learning in communication. Such an analysis is important in order to determine the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission's contribution to the past, present and future of communication instruction and pedagogy. Therefore, the theme analysis conducted in this research will show the lines that have been created by the members of the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission and offer new directions or incentives for coloring outside these lines.

The content of this paper includes the following: (1) A brief overview of experiential learning will be offered. This overview will help us assess, later in the paper, the degree to which the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission sponsored programs fit the essence of the idea of experiential learning; (2) A discussion of the methodology used to determine the themes within the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission sponsored programs will be offered; (3) The themes within the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission sponsored programs will be presented and discussed; and (4) Possible implications of these themes on the future direction of the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission will be discussed.

Overview of Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is, in its most simplistic form, a philosophical perspective that links the concrete with the abstract. By coupling the concrete and abstract elements of a lesson being presented, the learners should "attain a qualitatively superior level of knowing... confronting the learner with elements of reality which augment their understanding of the materials under investigation" (Sakofs, 1985, p. 159). According to Cooper (1991), the "underlying assumption of experiential learning is that we learn best when students are actively involved in the learning

process ... when they 'discover' knowledge through active participation" (p. 10). Experiential learning can bring what appears to be a detached every day world outside of the classroom into the learning experiences of the students, thus enabling them to feel more connected with the world while increasing their level of knowing in the classroom.

Joplin (1985) proposed a five-stage experiential learning model generalized from reviewing the processes and components of programs labeling themselves as experiential. This model includes: (1) the focus of the activity in which the educator presents the task and isolates areas of concentration; (2) the action needed to complete the task which may include placing students in unfamiliar settings, yet places the responsibility on the students to embrace this new situation; (3) the support which encourages the student to continue to try; (4) the necessary feedback which is linked to support and can be accomplished by supplying written or oral comments; and (5) the debrief step in which the conclusions and perceptions are recognized and verified against a greater body of perceptions (p. 159).

Furthermore, Joplin set forth characteristics of experiential learning which should be present in the five-step model. These characteristics include: (1) a student based rather than teacher based approach, (2) a personal not impersonal relationship to the subject, (3) a process and product orientation where the process of arriving at a conclusion is just as significant as the conclusion, (4) an evaluation of internal and external reasons which includes self-evaluation, (5) a holistic understanding in which the complexity of the situation is stress over the simple summation, (6) an organization around experience where the complex experience is the starting point and the analysis is the follow-up, (7) a perception base rather than theory base in which a student should be able to justify his/her perceptions rather than cite experts in the field, and (8) an individual based approach rather than group based so the individual can develop ideas and

explore alternatives (p. 159-160).

Although Joplin's model is thorough in its description of what components are needed in order for experiential learning to take place, other researchers identify the steps necessary for successful classroom experiential learning. The EDIT system assists educators in question construction and sequencing and is composed of four steps: (1) **Experiencing** the actual activity, (2) **Describing** what was seen, heard, thought, felt, etc., (3) **Inferring** cause and effect relationships, possible hypotheses, possible principles, etc., and (4) **Transferring** the principles to our own lives and drawing conclusions. Implicit within this method is the ability to construct higher level cognitive questions in order to challenge the students (Ellner & Barnes, 1983). Careful planning is a key element to effective utilization of higher level questioning in order to make an experiential activity beneficial to the students. The use of low level fact questions, paraphrased questions and low level cognitive questions often dominate the classroom thus negating the experiential learning benefits (Lamb, 1975; Rowe, 1978). It is when higher level questions are employed during the EDIT system that experiential learning becomes effective.

As presented in this section, experiential learning scholars present a unified perspective of what constitutes experiential learning and the benefits of it (Cooper, 1991; Covert, 1980; Ellner & Barnes, 1983; Joplin, 1985; Myers & Myers, 1975; Sakofs, 1985). This perspective creates a foundation for applications of experiential exercises, internships, the use of media and other classroom learning tools. Furthermore, this perspective reflects the borders and boundaries created for our perceptions of experiential learning. It is hoped that by examining how NCA Experiential Learning presenters have defined these borders and boundaries, that we can move towards redefining what it means to color outside the lines.

Research Methodology

In order to determine the trends and issues within experiential learning, all programs listed in the *(S)NCA Conference Programs* from 1993-1998 under the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission were used in this study. Programs were selected for analysis rather than individual papers because theme panels (panels where the papers fit a common theme) are the predominant format of submission. Similarly, theme panels are often times created by the commission program planner by combining individually submitted papers that share a common theme. A total of 87 programs were analyzed. Programs were defined as panel presentations only; therefore, preconference programs and business meetings were not included in this study.

Programs were analyzed using a theme analysis. According to Patton (1980), the goal of qualitative research is to produce descriptions of situations and events without imposing categories. Therefore, careful attention was placed on analyzing the programs without preconceived categories in order to produce descriptive data. Ultimately, emergence of the themes yields a greater understanding of the essence of experiential learning and the way in which it has been framed.

The method included two major steps. First, an analysis of emerging themes was performed to draw together material relating to different topics presented at conferences. All programs were listed chronologically and the titles were examined for key terms and concepts. To determine if the terms and/or concepts appeared to be significant, the programs were examined for multiple programs addressing the same terms and/or concepts.

The second step involved reviewing the categories and creating a matrix of program themes. The categories which emerged were judged by two criteria: internal homogeneity and external homogeneity (Guba, 1978). Internal homogeneity is the extent to which the data that

belong in a certain category hold together in a meaningful way while external homogeneity refers to the differences among categories being bold and clear. The category matrix was examined for completeness using the following criteria: internal and external plausibility, inclusiveness of the data, reproducibility and credibility (Guba, 1978, p. 56-57). The theme analysis was conducted by two researchers working independently for reliability in creating the matrix.

The patterns that emerged formed a matrix of dimensions, categories and classification schemes. By cross-classifying the dimensions until the most obvious and insightful dimensions emerged, the matrix was further refined and the following categories emerged: internships, service learning, outcome assessment, issues in experiential learning and experiential learning strategies and techniques. Finally, in order to fully understand the boundaries set by these categories, a tabulation of the number of programs and percentages within the categories emerging in this matrix is included in the following discussion of the research findings.

Convention Program Themes

Through the theme analysis conducted on the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission programs at the 1993-1998 conventions, five main themes were determined: (1) Internships; (2) Service Learning; (3) Assessment; 4) Issues in Experiential Learning; and (5) Experiential Learning Strategies and Techniques. Each of these themes will be discussed in the following section.

Internships

As one would expect, a major theme within Experiential Learning in Communication Commission sponsored programs between 1993 and 1998 was the issue of internships as a method of experiential learning for students in communication. A total of 18% of all Experiential

Learning in Communication Commission sponsored programs dealt with the topic of internships. There were three programs dealing with the topic of internships in 1993 and 1994, two programs in 1996 and 1997, and six programs in 1998. Surprisingly, considering the centrality of internships to experiential learning in communication, no programs on internships were offered in 1995.

Within the sixteen programs on internships offered between 1993 and 1998, several topics were discussed. A program entitled the "Internship Doctor" was offered in both 1993 and 1994. A common concern over the years has been the evaluation of the various facets of the internship experience. In 1993 a program entitled "Internship evaluation: Proposed criteria and instruments from three programs" was presented. In 1994 a roundtable discussion program aimed at "Identifying shared criteria and concerns" within internships was offered. In 1996 the Commission sponsored a program aimed at evaluating and assessing the internship experience. This program, entitled "Assessing the instruments we use for measuring internship evaluations, on-site supervisor contributions, and internship director effectiveness" introduced a new trend within the evaluation of the internship experience which addressed the concern about assessing the internship experience and its outcomes. This concern was echoed in the 1997 panel entitled "Does it exist?: Internship supervisors' search for the ideal employer assessment tool". Similarly, in 1998 a program entitled "Back to the future: The changing role of student internship assessment tools" continued with this concern.

A further grouping of programs within the internship theme can be identified as those dealing with internships within various contexts. For example, in 1993 a program examined "Placing adult learners in internships". In 1994 a program examined the "Intercultural internship" context and in 1998 the context was "Internships and media courses". Other

internship programs have addressed the "Role of internships in building community" (1994), "Developing partnerships for communication internships" (1997) and "Realities in college internship programs" (1998).

The issues and concerns about internship programs as an experiential learning tool within communication instruction is an important theme within the commission as displayed by the regularity with which internship panels are scheduled at the annual convention. Yet they may not be as much of a central cluster outside the lines of traditional communication pedagogy as many Experiential Learning In Communication Commission members may suspect. With only 18% of the total programs offered by the Commission dealing with internships, the centrality of this issue may be less significant than popular sentiment would assume. However, it should be noted that programs dealing with internships made up 38% of the programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission. This is more than double the 6-year average. It may be that internship issues are starting to reflect, in terms of program allocation, the centrality they hold in experiential leaning in communication discourse.

Service Learning

A second theme within programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning In Communication Commission was that of Service Learning. This theme cluster made up 12% of all programs between 1993 and 1998. Unlike in the internship theme discussed above, at least one program on service learning has been scheduled by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission every year at the NCA convention with a pattern of increased interest over time. There was one program each in 1993, 1994 and 1995, three programs in 1996 and two programs each in 1997 and 1998.

The first program was schedule in 1993 and was entitled "A view of praxis: Tools for

experiential education through service learning" This was followed in 1994 by a program entitled " Educational practice and community involvement" and in 1995 by a program entitled "Philosophical, pragmatic and pedagogical issues in the implementation of service learning into undergraduate communication courses" All three of these programs dealt with the issue and concerns of implementing the various facets of service learning as an experiential learning tool

Beginning in 1996, the interest in service learning became more apparent and extensive with seven programs being sponsored by the Experiential Learning In Communication Commission between 1996 and 1998 compared to just three between 1993 and 1995. However, the focus of these programs remained somewhat similar to their predecessors. For example, the 1996 program " Taking the helm through service learning: Connecting communication curriculum with the community" and the 1998 programs "Constructing partnerships for the classroom" and "Fostering dialogical learning experiences: Co-creating new visions" continued the theme of the 1994 program on "Educational practice and community involvement"

Similar to a trend witnessed within the internship theme, the issue of assessment within experiential learning activities became an issue for service learning also. In 1997 the issues of assessment was confronted in the program "The centrality of assessment in service learning projects". This program is the only assessment-related program thus far dealing with service learning compared to three such programs dealing with assessment issues and the internship experience

Three programs on service learning have examined the process of incorporating this experiential learning tool into specific communication courses. This has been achieved most directly through the 1996 program entitled "Service learning in the communication curriculum: Taking a leading role in education" This program included papers on incorporating service

learning into organizational communication, interpersonal communication, small group communication and communication research courses. Similarly, the 1997 program "Powerful examples of the service learning pedagogy: An interactive discussion for transforming your own courses" involved discussion of service learning in intercultural communication, heath communication and group communication courses. In addition, this program involved a discussion concerning developing a 'central service learning course in the speech curriculum'. A second 1996 program "Service learning: New directions in communication theory research and pedagogy" included papers which examined service learning in various communication theories and courses.

The increase in the number of programs on service learning scheduled by the Experiential Learning In Communication Commission shows the increasing interest and importance of this experiential learning tool. It is also interesting to note that there is a certain degree of overlap between this theme and that of internships. For example, the two 1998 programs "Constructing partnerships for the classroom" and "Fostering dialogical learning experiences: Co-creating new visions" appear to offer advice on building relationships which could enhance service learning and internship experiential learning opportunities.

Outcome Assessment

A third theme found in the programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission at NCA conventions between 1993 and 1998 was that of outcome assessment. This theme cluster made up 10% of all programs scheduled. However, unlike the internship and the service learning themes, programs on outcome assessment were not scheduled earlier than 1995. In 1995 three outcome assessment programs were scheduled. There was one program in 1996, two in 1997 and a further three programs in 1998. The interest in outcome

assessment of experiential learning activities would appear to mirror the national trend in the concern for student outcome assessment of all communication instruction and pedagogy.

As was noted above, the issue of assessing the outcomes of experiential learning activities was first introduced into Experiential Learning in Communication Commission sponsored programs at the 1995 convention. All three of the programs scheduled that year can be seen as introducing Commission members to the concept and ideas of experiential learning assessment. The first program scheduled was entitled "Live it! learn it!. Applications and assessment of experiential learning". The second program was entitled "Assessing experiential learning. A roundtable discussion" focused on the issue of assessing internships. While the third program, utilizing the poster session format, entitled "Assessing student learning outcomes from experiential instruction in various types of communication classrooms" addressed the issue of assessing experiential learning in more than half-a-dozen different classes.

The 1996 program "Assessing the instruments we use for measuring internship evaluations, on-site supervisor contributions, and internship director effectiveness" (which also appears in the internship theme cluster) continued the idea of how to assess outcomes in internship activities. However, this time the focus was more on evaluating how we assess rather than on simply how to do the assessment. This concern was further discussed by the 1997 program "Does it exist? Internship supervisors' search for the ideal employer assessment tool" (Again cross listed within the internship theme) and the 1998 program "Back to the future. The changing role of student internship assessment tools" (Again cross listed within the internship theme). In a similar vain the 1997 program "The centrality of assessment in service learning projects" (Cross listed under the service learning theme) focussed on evaluating how we conduct assessment of service learning activities.

What is most interesting about the programs contained within this theme is that comparatively little attention has been focussed on the assessment of student outcomes of experiential learning tools and activities with classroom games, simulations and role-plays. It can be argued that far more students engage in experiential learning activities within various classes than do internships or service learning projects. Yet assessing what the students take away from these experiential learning activities has gained very little attention. Only the 1995 poster session program entitled "Assessing student learning outcomes from experiential instruction in various types of communication classrooms" and the 1998 program "Course and self-assessment in the small group communication classroom" have focused on assessing in-class student outcomes of experiential learning activities. This would appear to be an area of experiential instruction and pedagogy in need of further investigation.

Issues in Experiential Learning

A total of 14 programs, or 16% of all programs sponsored, combine to create a fourth theme 'Issues in Experiential Learning'. These programs deal with concerns about the nature of experiential learning, dimensions of experiential learning, activities within experiential learning and new directions for experiential learning instruction and pedagogy.

The first program to address current concerns on the state of experiential learning was 1993's "A national survey of experiential education topics in communication Master's degree programs". This was followed in1995 by "Exploring cultural bias in commonly used experientially-based learning tools and activities in the communication classroom". This program addressed the issues of racial, ethnic, gender and cross-cultural bias in used experientially based learning tools and activities. A second 1995 program, this time in the poster session format, "Experiential education issues in teaching intercultural communication" had a

related focus. A third example of a program concerned with the current state of experiential learning was 1997's "Pedagogical implications of diversity issues and experiential learning" which focussed on offering advice on how to encourage acceptance of diversity through experiential learning.

Two 1997 programs can be seen as offering a discussion of dimension within experiential learning. The programs "Celebrating learning style differences as central to experiential education" and "Games, simulations, exercises and technology to address learning differences in classrooms and the workplace" discuss the issue of adapting experiential learning activities to the different learning styles of class members.

A number of programs have addressed the issue of the future of experiential learning instruction and pedagogy. In 1997 a program entitled "Facilitated learning: Instruction for the 21st century" discussed the move towards facilitated learning emphasizing collaborative learning in various communication contexts. This program was followed in 1998 by one entitled "Exploring the process: A twentieth century approach to learning communication" (Note: we are assuming that this program should have read 'a twenty-first century approach..'). It is interesting that the issue of the future of experiential learning has become of interest as the new century approaches.

Experiential Learning Strategies and Techniques

The fourth, and by far the largest, theme of programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission is that of 'experiential learning strategies and techniques' The programs in this theme make up 44% all programs scheduled by the Commission with 38 of the 87 scheduled programs between 1993 and 1998 on this theme. The 'experiential learning strategies and techniques' theme consists of programs which discuss

strategies and techniques used in experiential learning in communication instruction and pedagogy. The contents of this theme can be further broken down into three sub-themes: Using experiential learning in communication courses; Using media and technology as an experiential learning tool; and Using experiential learning to enhance communication skills. Each of these sub-themes will be discussed below.

Using Experiential Learning in the Communication Classroom

This sub-theme consisted of 21 programs or 55% of programs contained within the "Experiential Learning Strategies and Techniques" theme. This means that 24% of all programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission between 1993 and 1998 related to using experiential learning in the communication classroom. This figure is greater than that of the internships, service learning and outcome assessment themes. The programs contained within this sub-theme addressed the issue of using experiential learning tools and activities in a variety of communication classrooms. The advice contained within these programs usually was on either how to incorporate experiential learning into the communication classroom or offered various specific activities and tools for a particular type of communication course.

Programs aimed on offering advice on using experiential learning in the communication classroom include the 1993 panel "Experiential learning in the communication classroom" which offered suggestions on how to use experiential learning in communication classes such as communication research, interpersonal communication and small group communication. The 1995 program entitled "Using games and simulations in the classroom: Designing, doing, debriefing" offered advice on incorporating and processing experiential learning activities in communication courses in general terms. Similarly, two programs in 1998, " Simulation and experiential teaching methodologies in core communication courses" and "Experiential learning

methods across the communication curriculum" provided advice for many communication courses.

A number of programs have offered advice on specific activities to be used in particular communication courses. A number of programs have combined advice on experiential learning activities in many courses into one session. For example, in 1994 program "Creativity exercises for communication courses" offered specific activities to be used in courses such as interpersonal communication, leadership communication, critical thinking and performance studies. Similarly, the 1996 poster session format program "Taking the helm: Experiential classroom activities" offered experiential learning activities for a number of communication courses. Finally, the 1997 program "Educating through the conflict: Small groups at work" offered suggestions for five different communication courses.

Conversely, some panels have focussed on offering advice and activities for specific communication courses. For example, information for use in intercultural communication courses has been offered in the 1993 and 1994 programs both entitled "Experiential learning in intercultural communication classes in higher education" and the 1995 poster session format program "Experiential learning in the intercultural context". Other programs devoted to specific courses include: "Incorporating student experience to teach fundamentals, business communication and speaking apprehension" in 1993; "Teaching the gender course with diverse student populations: A roundtable discussion of issue and problems of pedagogy and research" in 1995; "There is nothing so practical as a good theory: An experiential approach to teaching communication theory" in 1996; and "Using case studies in the interpersonal communication classroom" in 1998.

The significantly large number of programs offered by the Experiential Learning In Communication Commission dealing with either how to do experiential learning or offering specific activities and tools for doing experiential learning shows the centrality of this issue to the membership. More programs focus on this issue than any other. However, even within this sub-theme there appears to be a lack of attention placed on student outcome assessment and evaluation of such experiential learning activities. This may need to become a focus for future programs.

Using Media and Technology as an Experiential Learning Tool

Programs relating to the use of media and technology as an experiential learning tool made up 21% of programs included in the 'Experiential learning strategies and techniques' theme and 9% of all program sponsored by the Commission between 1993 and 1998. Programs within this sub-theme offered advice and activities on the use of various media forms and technological innovations as experiential learning tools in the communication classroom.

Programs addressing the use of media included the 1993 program "The use of video as an experiential vehicle in communication pedagogy", the 1994 program "The use of media as an experiential learning tool in communication pedagogy", and 1995's poster session program "Integrating media as an experiential learning tool: A practical guide to processing and debriefing". These programs offered suggestions on how various video clips could be used as experiential learning tools in several communication courses such as organizational communication, communication theory, rhetorical criticism, intercultural communication and interpersonal communication. The 1995 poster session "Enhancing communication education through C-Span in the classroom" shared this focus.

Programs relating to using various types of technology as experiential learning tools within the communication classroom included the 1995 poster session program "The role of multimedia resources in experiential education". This focus was later followed by two 1997 programs, "Expanding the walls of the communication classroom: Experiences with on-line communication" and "Alternative media in experiential learning". Both of these programs offered advice and suggestions on using various new technologies such as the Internet, World Wide Web, e-mail and computer mediated communication in various communication courses.

It is interesting to note that no programs on this sub-theme were offered in either 1996 or 1998. It would have been appropriate to think that with the increasing centrality of the internet and World Wide Web in college students lives that the issue of how to use such media as experiential learning tools in communication courses would be worthy of more attention. This is a theme that definitely operates outside of the lines and deserves its place within experiential learning in communication instruction, pedagogy and research.

Using Experiential Learning to Enhance Communication Skills

A total of nine programs have focused on how the use of experiential learning instruction and pedagogy can enhance communication skills. These programs make up 24% of the 'experiential learning strategies and techniques' theme and 10% of all sponsored programs. The focus of these programs is on how specific communication skills, rather than communication courses, can be changed and enhanced through the application of experiential learning methods.

The first of this type of program was offered in 1993. The program entitled "Using instructional strategies to enhance culture consciousness in and out of the classroom" aimed to apply experientially based activities to enhancing culture consciousness. A second 1993 panel, "Experiential interaction in listening for college students: Theoretical and practical approaches to

teaching listening" aimed an offering ways to enhance student listening skills. The theme was continued in the 1994 program "Building a cohesive group climate through silent interaction" where presenters shared various nonverbal and listening activities and the 1998 program "Partnerships into the new century: Advancing cultural awareness through experiential partnerships". One final program worthy of noting in this sub-theme is the 1996 program "The role of experiential learning in the development of Graduate Teaching Assistants" which offered multiple perspectives on its theme.

Programs in this sub-theme offer an interesting twist on the use of experiential learning in communication. The focus on how experiential learning instruction and pedagogy can be used to enhance communication core skills across the curriculum offers a more holistic approach than other themes. This approach may offer useful insights into the reinforcement of core communication competencies throughout communication education

Conclusion

The results from a theme analysis of programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission of the National Communication Association between 1993 and 1998 have been presented. A total of five main program themes were found: Internships; Service learning; Outcome assessment; Issues in experiential learning; and experiential learning strategies and techniques. Almost all programs sponsored by the Commission fit into these five themes. Only a few panels, such as the two competitive paper panels sponsored by the Commission between 1993 and 1998, do not fit a theme.

The themes show that although the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission 'colors outside the lines' as far as traditional and mainstream communication instruction and pedagogy is concerned, it colors outside these lines in structured ways. The Commission's

members have created their own boundaries and lines within which the vast majority of their work fits. This is not to imply that such boundaries and lines are a bad thing – just that these lines do appear to exist.

From the themes discovered it would appear that the programs sponsored by the Commission fit the essence and purpose of experiential learning. For example, Cooper (1991), argues that the "underlying assumption of experiential learning is that we learn best when students are actively involved in the learning process ... when they 'discover' knowledge through active participation" (p. 10). The vast majority of programs sponsored by the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission can be seen to address this issue. Programs in the internship, service learning, outcome assessment and experiential learning strategies and techniques themes all offer advice and information on how to get students actively involved in the learning process. Another aspect of experiential learning is to link the concrete with the abstract, this objective would appear to be achieved in all of the themes listed above as well as in the 'issues in experiential learning' theme.

However, from this theme analysis, there would appear to be areas of investigation and practice which could become part of the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission picture outside the lines. For example, more attention could be given to assessing the outcomes of various experiential learning strategies and techniques. This issue has been addressed for internship and service learning programs, however, work needs to be undertaken on assessing the outcomes of specific classroom activities. Considering that 25% of all sponsored programs offer information and activities for conducting experiential learning exercises in communication classes, one would think that it would be appropriate to assess whether the students get out of these activities what we think they should.

Another area that could be included in the experiential learning picture is that of theory and method development and evaluation. Some programs have attempted to evaluate various methods of experiential learning; however, not one program between 1993 and 1998 focused on discussing the underlying theory and philosophy of experiential learning. It is not surprising considering the very nature of experiential learning that such discussions are missing, however a case could be made for the need for theory building within experiential learning.

Another interesting omission from the experiential learning picture is the use of the poster session format to discuss member's ideas. Only in 1996 when Commissions/Divisions were 'forced' by NCA to include a large number of poster sessions in their sponsored programs has the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission embraced this format. Due to the experiential nature of this format, it is a little surprising that not more programs have utilized this format.

Overall, it can be determined from this analysis that the Experiential Learning in Communication Commission does indeed 'color outside the lines' of traditional and mainstream communication instruction and pedagogy. It can also be determined that by doing so the Commission has created its own new lines within which it frequently stays. There can be little doubt that these new lines serve the needs of Commission members well. However, there is definitely an area outside the new lines just waiting to be colored.

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